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ABSTRACT

This paper sets forth a definition and operational description of a developmental program that should be of use as a guide, especially to Virginia's teachers and administrators. Also included in the paper are kindergarten curriculum objectives in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science, art, social studies, family life, health, mental health, nutrition, personal growth and personal health, safety and first aid, physical fitness and conditioning, movement education, rhythmic activities and dance, stunts, tumbling, gymnastics, game skills, and music. These objectives are followed by a suggested schedule for 6-hour day programs and guidelines for school organization and practices related to developmental kindergarten programs in the areas of parent involvement, teacher training, formal and informal assessment, and transition from kindergarten to first grade. Concluding discussion offers a statement of resolve to promote and maintain appropriate programs in kindergarten. (RH)

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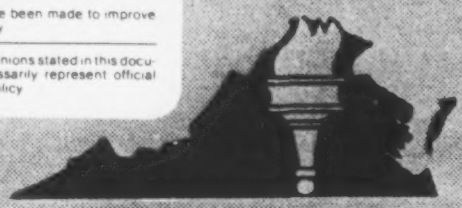

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# *Developmental Kindergarten*

## *Definition and Description*

**Virginia Department of Education**
**Elementary Education**
**P. O. Box 69**
**Richmond, Virginia**

**October 1989**

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# *Developmental Kindergarten*

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**October 1989**

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## INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten children are the most ready of all students in school to embrace learning, if they are **healthy, well-fed** and **unafraid**. Few people disagree with this statement about five-year-olds. There is, however, misunderstanding about how they learn best and about what is relevant and meaningful to them and about what will develop a disposition for future learning. Today schools are searching for curricula, organizational patterns, and teaching methods most appropriate for all children; however, those curricula, organizational structures, and methods chosen for kindergarten children must set right the inappropriate and unproductive approaches of the last fifteen years.

Parents, teachers, and citizens are concerned that kindergarten programs have focused recently on a narrow range of academic skills and have produced pressures on children, parents, and teachers that are counterproductive for future learning and living. Many ills have sprung from a **poorly-conceived curriculum and inappropriate methods**. The need to test and find those children unready for a set academic program; the need to add transitional grades before or after the kindergarten year so that children can cope with pressures that are not found in an appropriate program; and the need to experiment with the kindergarten entrance age so that multiple missions of child care, early stimulation for at-risk students, and stringent academic preparation for first grade can be served in the kindergarten year are the more serious problems.

Each of these missteps created a myriad of new problems to be solved in artificial ways that carried the program farther and farther from children's needs.

- The question of lost self-esteem emerged for our youngest and our most needy children, when they failed an entrance test.
- A confusing organizational pattern of transition grades was created and is failing to produce any gains in achievement for students assigned to them.
- The need arose to advise some parents not to send their child to kindergarten because "the child would not succeed" based on a brief sampling of the child's behavior.
- Parents regarded schooling as a race for the heartiest and kept their children home until they were academically stronger, thus depriving some children of the opportunity to learn and associate with their peers.
- A spread in the ages of kindergarten children emerged which caused teachers concern about meeting an unrealistic range of interests, abilities, and experiences.

So many wrongs stemmed from inappropriate responses to the question, "What should a curriculum do to produce children who think, who desire to keep on learning, and who can succeed in a world that requires language skills, problem-solving, creativity, and cooperation?"

Because of the misunderstanding about developmental kindergarten programs, this paper sets forth a definition and an operational description of the program. Kindergarten in Virginia and in the nation began as a developmental program built around the characteristics of five-year-olds. Kindergarten, as it was originally intended, was a safe place where children learned how to learn, to cooperate, and to respect themselves and others. Virginia 's publication A Guide for Kindergarten (1975) described appropriate practices for teaching and learning and is as current in its approach as it was in 1975. In the years following its implentation, a steady and persistent shift of academic requirements from first grade to kindergarten occurred. Well-intentioned efforts to begin learning as early as possible went awry as the characteristics of five-year-olds were ignored, and the ways in which they learn were misunderstood. Today more than ever before, the original goals of kindergarten are critical if young children are to build a foundation for future learning and living.

The proposed Accreditation Standards for Public Schools in Virginia include the following requirement under the instructional program standard:

> "Kindergarten programs shall be developmental programs that recognize varying patterns and rates of individual development"

This paper defines and describes a developmental program and should guide teachers and administrators as they implement appropriate practices.

## DEVELOPMENTAL KINDERGARTEN

Definition

A program that is **developmentally appropriate** is built around the characteristics of the children in the program. A first step towards providing a developmental kindergarten, then, must be an understanding and acceptance of the physical, social, intellectual, and emotional qualities of five-year-olds. Program development begins with a description of **kindergarten children**. Some of these characteristics five-year-olds have in common with children of all ages, and some of them are unique to children of four, five, and six years of age.

1. **Kindergarten children are unique individuals.**
   Children enter kindergarten with a wide range of interests, abilities, and experiences; therefore, the curriculum for kindergarten children must be individually appropriate, as well as appropriate for five-year-olds as a group.

2. **Kindergarten children are ready to learn.**
   Children are born with an imperative to know and to learn and are naturally curious about their world. They learn best, however, when they are involved in activities that engage their minds and that are interesting, relevant, and meaningful to them and permit them to have direct experiences with concrete materials.

3. **Kindergarten children construct their knowledge about the world by interacting with real objects and people.**
   Children learn naturally through observation and manipulation of real objects and interactions with others in an effort to make sense of their world. Appropriate materials and experiences stimulate thought, promote problem-solving behavior, and build a foundation for future learning.

4. **Kindergarten children are developing physically, socially, and emotionally as well as cognitively .**
   Children need opportunities to interact with others in a variety of situations as they begin to develop knowledge and skills that lead to competence in these areas. Such interactions promote the development of independence and responsibility, a positive self-concept, and respect for self and others.

5. **Kindergarten children need an orderly environment with caring, competent adults to guide them.**

Children need a learning environment that is safe, healthy, and predictable. Children also need opportunities to interact with adults who stimulate thinking and language and develop dispositions in children that lead to an interest in learning. Kindergarten teachers must know about child development and early childhood education, have had supervised experience teaching kindergarten children, and must be able to employ appropriate strategies to meet the diverse needs of children.

Description

A second step in providing a developmentally appropriate kindergarten must be to formulate an **operational description** of practices, methods, and materials that ensure that the program is developmental. The description is clarified when what is developmental practice is contrasted with what is not. Therefore, the following statements of what is and what is not developmentally appropriate are critical to program design.

**IN A DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE KINDERGARTEN:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **The curriculum is both appropriate for five-year-olds as a group as well as for individual five-year-olds.** | **The curriculum is not narrowly focused on small, abstract facts that all children must master.** |
| Children choose from a variety of activities and materials that match their particular level. Activities are open-ended to allow for individual differences and diversity of responses. Materials are concrete and present opportunities for mutiple use. | Activities and materials are not designed to elicit one correct response or produce look-alike products based on teacher-made patterns or models. |
| **The activities are interesting, meaningful, and relevant to young children.** | **The activities are not selected because a textbook or commercial set of materials determines the curriculum.** |
| Children engage in activities that are based on their daily life experiences with people and objects in their environment. | Activities are not based on topics that are unfamiliar to the children, unrelated to previous experiences, or focused on separate and discrete subject areas of the curriculum. |
| **Materials and experiences are designed to promote interaction and construction of knowledge.** | **Materials and experiences are not designed so that children are expected to accept passively predetermined learning of others.** |
| Children select from materials that promote exploration, invite close scrutiny, and stimulate thought. Children also have opportunites and time to explore their environment as they take field trips and interact with people in their world. | Activities are not based on the premature use of symbols requiring abstract thought processes. Activities and materials are not removed from the level of experience to the level of symbolic representation as in workbooks and ditto sheets. |

**Opportunites are provided to enhance the growth and development of the whole child.**

Children are free to move about as they actively explore and examine the learning environment. Children interact with other children and adults as they work cooperatively on projects, play with one another in learning and interest centers, and make decisions about the materials they will use and the people with whom they will become involved. Children assume responsibility for their own materials and actions and resolve their own conflicts as they plan what they will do, accept consequences that arise from their choices, and consider alternatives in solving their problems.

**Adults prepare a physical and emotional environment that will nurture and facilitate learning.**

Children enter an environment that is planned, organized, and maintained in an orderly way. This orderly environment helps children to make choices and assume responsibility for selecting, using, and cleaning up materials. Teachers model behaviors that promote learning by asking questions, listening to children's responses, planning activities, and providing materials based on children's expressed interest.

**Learning is not narrowly defined as the acquisition of academic skills.**

Children are not engaged in predominantly cognitive tasks in which they must sit quietly as they listen to teachers talk and demonstrate how to complete workbooks or dittoed sheets.

**Teachers do not leave the environment to chance nor do they depend on commercial programs to create the environment.**

Children do not make all the choices with the teacher passively accepting a "do as you like" attitude. Teachers do not rely on predetermined curricula and ignore the curriculum which arises from children's interests and questions.

**Learning occurs as a result of children's natural curiosity.**

Children are intrinsically motivated to learn. As they experience success and receive feedback that is tied to their performance their motivation is enhanced.

**Learning does not depend on motivation based on external rewards.**

Stickers, prizes, grades, or generalized use of praise are avoided.

**Children explore personal interests, take risks, solve their own problems, and assume responsibility.**

Children develop a sense of competence in themselves and their unique abilities as they choose meaningful and relevant activities and experiences that are at the appropriate level of difficulty or challenge, and as they are supported and nurtured by the people in their environment.

**Teachers do not direct children's activities to the extent that children cannot construct knowledge for themselves.**

Learning experiences are not designed to rob children of the opportunity to develop their increasing independence in all that they do.

**Language development is the core of the program.**

Children assume the role of both the speaker and the listener in informal conservation and express themselves in dictation of stories and through their own writing using scribble writing and invented spelling. Children develop an awareness of print and read appropriate materials when they show an interest.

**Language instruction is not limited to prereading skills.**

Formal phonetic instruction is not presented with drill on isolated sounds and symbols. Children are not expected to cover a prescribed number of preprimers.

**Learning is an integrated process.**

Children participate in activities and experiences that bring together subject areas as they are encountered in everyday life.

**Learning is not presented as fragmented pieces of information to be acquired without direct experience.**

Discrete subject areas that prevent children from seeing their world as a whole are not the focus for learning.

## CURRICULUM

In Virginia the Standards of Learning Objectives are the curriculum framework that teachers must draw upon as they provide integrated experiences for children. This curriculum includes all content areas taught in the elementary school. For kindergarten children, however, it should be presented not as isolated subject matter, but as integrated experiences that foster thinking, develop skills, and lay foundations for future learning.

A science objective related to classifying objects as attracted or not attracted by a magnet is taught as a child plays with a magnet and a box of objects of assorted materials and observes that the magnet attracts some objects and leaves others unaffected. Independently or with the teacher's guidance, the child may explore the room to find the objects to which the magnet clings or does not cling and may classify them into groups. This same science experience can provide an opportunity for the child to grow in the use of language as findings are discussed with the teacher or excitement shared with a friend. Vocabulary increases as words are used to label ideas and concepts, and the value and usefulness of reading and writing emerge as lists are made of objects attracted and those unaffected by the magnet. This is a sufficiently broad experience to allow children to construct their own knowledge.

On the otherhand, a worksheet with pictures of a magnet and objects attracted or unaffected, accompanied by a teacher's explanation of what a magnet is and does and followed by an activity that directs the child to draw a line between the picture of the magnet and an object attracted to the magnet will not help five-year-olds to learn as they learn best. The difference in the two approaches does not lie in what is being taught and learned but rather in how it is taught and learned. Paper-and-pencil activities are an inadequate substitute for first-hand experiences in building foundational learning. There is little value in the use of readiness workbooks or worksheets in kindergarten. These materials can be detrimental in taking time from other more meaningful activities, in ignoring the ways in which young children learn, and in the negative attitudes toward learning which they often produce. Abstract and meaningless activities do not produce a disposition to learn in young learners.

The Standards of Learning Objectives for each subject area and a suggested schedule are included in this paper because they will guide the curriculum decisions that teachers must make about **what** the group of five-year-olds and individual five-year-olds are interested in and need to know. It is, however, the teacher who must decide **how** to structure the experience so that one child or a group of children learn it best and continue to learn other important knowledge.

## Standards of Learning
## Kindergarten

### Language Arts

K.1 **The student will assume the roles of both the speaker and the listener in formal conversation.**
Descriptive Statement: By responding to and initiating dialogue, the student recognizes that oral communication is a process of interaction between speaker and listener.

K.2 **The student will develop listening comprehension skills.**
Descriptive Statement: The student answers questions about information read or told to him/her (who, what, when, where).

K.3 **The student will develop the beginning motor skills essential for manipulating writing tools.**
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is on experimenting through painting, pasting, folding, cutting, finger play, building with small blocks, working puzzles, using tactile letters, and copying and tracing letters and words.

K.4 **The student will participate in a variety of literary experiences.**
Descriptive Statement: The student will hear, recite, and create rhymes, poetry, and a variety of stories to develop appreciation for and enjoyment of literature, as well as a sense of story structure.

K.5 **The student will interact with others in a variety of activities that stimulate language growth.**
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is on increasing the child's facility with language, developing social skills, and increasing delight in using language creatively, through games, dramatic play, and musical activities.

K.6 **The student will acquire experiences necessary for language development and thinking.**
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is on involving all of the senses through a broad range of activities such as trips, cooking, housekeeping and store centers, and science demonstrations.

K.7 **The student will demonstrate growth in visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic perception.**
Descriptive Statement: Activities such as remembering experiences, identifying textures, exploring objects and relationships in space, being aware of the body and its movements, and recognizing likeness and differences lay a foundation for thinking and understanding printed symbols.

K.8 **The student will develop an awareness of print.**
Descriptive Statement: Exploring books and print in the environment fosters a desire and appreciation for reading.

K.9 **The student will demonstrate growth in the process of logical thinking.**
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is on sequencing, classifying, asking questions, making choices, and expressing opinions as the basis for developing problem-solving abilities.

K.10 **The student will communicate ideas through written symbols.**
Descriptive Statement: Using picture drawing, scribble writing, invented spelling and/or dictation, the student communicates ideas about personal experiences, events, stories, objects, and pictures to develop an understanding that oral language can be written and that written communication can be used for self expression.

## Mathematics

K.1 **The student, given two sets having ten or fewer members, will identify one set as having more members, fewer members, or the same number of members as the other set.**
Descriptive Statement: Concrete objects will be used.

K.2 **The student, given a set having 0 to 10 members, will identify the number of members and the corresponding numeral.**
Descriptive Statement: Concrete objects will be used. The intent is to identify not write.

K.3 **The student will trace the numeral 0 through 10.**
Descriptive Statements: Sand, sandpaper, carpeting, finger paint, and other tactile materials will be used rather than pencil and paper.

K.4 **The student, given an ordered set of three objects, will indicate which object is in the position of first, middle, or last.**
Descriptive Statement: Concrete objects and pictures will be used. All objects should be left to right progression.

K.5 **The student will combine two sets of objects each with five or fewer objects and count the number of objects in the combined set.**
Descriptive Statement: Concrete objects will be used. The intent is to develop an understanding of the concept of addition.

K.6 **The student will remove a subset from a set of ten or fewer objects and count the number of objects remaining.**
Descriptive Statement: Concrete objects will be used. The intent is to develop an undertanding of the concept of subtraction.

K.7 **The student will compare the length or height of two similar objects.**
Descriptive Statement: The content will include the concept of shorter or longer and shorter or taller.

K.8 **The student, given appropriate pictures, will identify which of two events requires more time to complete.**
Descriptive Statement: The events must clearly indicate that a significant difference in time is required to complete; such as, painting a small box and painting a large box. The events depicted must be familiar to students.

K.9 **The student, given appropriate pictures, will identify which of two environments appear to be hotter.**
Descriptive Statement: The environments must clearly indicate that a wide variation in temperature exists. The environments depicted must be familiar to students.

K.10 **The student will identify which of two identical containers has more liquid.**
Descriptive Statement: Actual containers will be used.

K.11 **The student will recognize a penny and a nickel.**
Descriptive Statement: Real pennies and nickels will be used.

K.12 **The student will determine by counting the value of a collection of ten or fewer pennies.**
Descriptive Statement: Real pennies or models will be used.

K.13 **The student will identify triangles, squares, and circles.**
Descriptive Statement: Concrete models will be used.

K.14 **The student will make an object graph using 10 or fewer objects.**
Descriptive Statement: Concrete objects will be used.

K.15 **The student will group objects according to common attributes.**
Descriptive Statement: Attributes to be considered will be size, color, shape, or use. Problems will require the use of only one attribute at a time.

## Science

K.1 **The student will share responsibilities and tasks, and use materials in a safe manner.**

K.2 **The student will identify the body organ associated with each of the five senses, and use the senses to observe and describe common objects.**

K.3 **The student will describe an object on the basis of color, shape, texture, size, and position.**
Descriptive Statement: These descriptions should include the eight basic colors; the four basic shapes; textures such as rough-smooth, hard-soft; size in terms of large-small, big-little; positions such as in-out, over-under. This is not intended to include left-right as position.

K.4 **The student will sort and classify objects using one variable.**
Descriptive Statement: Objects with similar characteristics should be physically grouped by the child.

K.5 **The student will compare two concrete objects by using terms which refer to length, width, size, or weight.**
Descriptive Statement: Terms such as longer/shorter, heavier/lighter, fatter/thinner, bigger/smaller should be used. The objects should be compared using only one variable at a time.

K.6 **The student will demonstrate increasing curiosity about the world around him or her.**
Descriptive Statement: Examples of curiosity include watching and wondering, telling experiences, and asking questions.

K.7 **The student will classify objects as floating and sinking while participating in water-play activities.**
Descriptive Statement: The student should guess which of a given set of objects will float and which will sink before actually testing the objects in a container of water.

K.8 **The student will classify objects as attracted or not attracted by a magnet while working with a magnet.**
Descriptive Statement: The student should guess which of a given set of objects will be attracted by a magnet before actually testing the objects with a magnet.

K.9 **The student will observe that the form of objects can be changed.**
Descriptive Statement: Examples of common changes in form are water to ice, batter to cake, clay ball to clay rope, sugar to sugar water.

K.10 **The student will observe and describe daily weather conditions.**
Descriptive Statement: Terms such as hot, cold, rainy, sunny, cloudy, foggy, snowy, clear, warm, cool should be used.

K.11 **The student will describe the characteristics of living things and identify familiar objects as living or non-living.**
Descriptive Statement: Awareness that living things grow and need food, water, and air to survive is required.

K.12 **The student will describe some ways in which living things change as they grow and develop.**
Descriptive Statement: Changes may include size, color, shape, form or activities.

K.13 **The student will match parents and their offspring.**
Descriptive Statement: Common animals with which the child is familiar should be used.

K.14 **The student will observe and describe similarities and differences between various environments.**
Descriptive Statement: Environments such as home/school; country/city; and zoo/jungle, should be used for comparisons.

K.15 **The student will demonstrate ways to conserve energy and natural resources which are commonly used.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes turning off water after use, turning off lights either in school or at home, closing doors, and not wasting paper.

K.16 **The student will demonstrate a responsible attitude toward the home and school environment by participating in a waste management program.**
Descriptive Statement: Examples include making fire starters from scrap paper, recycling aluminum cans or returnable bottles, picking up litter, and keeping a compost pile.

## Art

Program Emphasis: At this level art stresses the philosophy of a positive self-concept and the theme of "me, my and mine." Activities should emphasize only one of the design elements of line, shape, texture or color at a time.

K.1 **The student will discover that the senses are avenues of self expression through art.**
Descriptive Statement: Experiences using the senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste help the student to create art.

K.2 **The student will express personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings.**
Descriptive Statement: This requires imagination and originality to produce art products.

K.3 **The student will share personal artwork.**
Descriptive Statement: The involves using art experiences for visual appreciation and to build oral communication skills.

K.4 **The student will demonstrate motor skills through art experiences.**
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis is on motor skills needed for painting, pasting, folding, cutting, modeling, and constructing.

K.5 **The student will demonstrate proper care and use of art materials.**
Descriptive Statement: This requires following directions for conserving materials, using tools properly, and taking turns.

K.6 **The student will identify colors by name.**
Descriptive Statement: The colors red, yellow, blue, orange, green, purple, brown, black, and white will be used.

K.7 **The student will identify line and line characteristics.**
Descriptive Statement: This requires the student to name lines which are straight/curved, thick/thin, long/short, up/down or across.

K.8 **The student will identify basic two-dimension shapes.**
Descriptive Statement: The shapes of square, rectangle, circle, and triangle are used.

K.9 **The student will identify textures.**
Descriptive Statement: Textures such as rough, smooth, hard and soft are named. This requires the sense of both sight and touch.

K.10 **The student will express thoughts and feelings through a combined use of the visual and performing arts.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is upon building a positive self-concept through the use of puppets, masks, and other visual art forms in combination with storytelling, music, and creative movement.

## Social Studies
Self, Family, and School

K.1 **The student will recognize self as a unique individual.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on naming, locating, and identifying functions of basic body parts (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, arms, hands, fingers, legs, toes, feet, head) and comparing physical characteristics (hair color, eye color, etc.) to develop a feeling of uniqueness. Information such as full name, sex, birthday, address, and telephone number should be included.

K.2 **The student will identify and describe personal feelings.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on feelings such as happiness, surprise, sadness, anger, and fear. Students will recognize and show respect for these feelings in self and others and will be encouraged to associate these feelings with possible causes.

K.3 **The student will assume classroom responsibilities.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on taking care of personal and school property, getting along with others, doing assigned tasks, and participating in group activities.

K.4 **The student will demonstrate an understanding of the rules to be followed in the school, on the playground, and to and from school.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on understanding the need for and practicing specific rules, such as those related to bus safety.

K.5 **The student will recognize that there are different family structures.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on recognizing that different family organizational structures (such as single parent, nuclear family, and extended family) can fulfill the same basic emotional and physical needs of children.

K.6 **The student will identify examples of the basic physical needs of people as being food, clothing, and shelter and recognize that they are essential to life.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on studying different types of food, clothing, and shelter that people use to meet these needs.

K.7 **The student will use simple charts and graphs.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on calendars, weather charts, learning center charts, and helper charts.

K.8 **The student will demonstrate an understanding of terms that give direction, location, and distance.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on terms such as *up/down*, *near/far*, and *behind/next* to.

K.9 **The student will identify the adults in school by the jobs they perform.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus will be on understanding the jobs performed by various adults such as principals, teachers, librarians, secretaries, and custodial staff.

**Family Life**

K.1 **The student will experience success and positive feelings about self.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes experiencing success in school work and home tasks, pride in his or her body, the effective handling of routine situations, and acceptance from others. These experiences are provided by the teacher through the climate of the classroom environment. Parents are encouraged to reinforce these positive experiences and feelings at home. Emphasis is placed on respect for racial and ethnic differences.

K.2 **The student will experience respect from and for others.**
Descriptive Statement: Teachers and other adults at school actively listen to and accept feelings and opinions of the child. A classroom climate which protects the child from physical and emotional infringements by others is provided. The child also learns and practices courtesy and good manners.

K.3 **The student will become aware of the effects of his or her behavior on others and the effects of others' behavior on himself or herself.**
Descriptive Statement: The teacher uses appropriate descriptive language to explain to a child how his or her behavior affects others positively as well as negatively. The same descriptive language is used to explain to a child the effects of others' behavior on him or her. This approach is reinforced by other school personnel and parents are encouraged to continue such explanations at home. The child is introduced to the concept of privacy, especially in the use of bathroom facilities. In addition, the importance of avoiding gossip about others' personal or family problems is stressed.

K.4 **The student will recognize that everyone is a member of a family and that families come in many forms.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes a variety of family forms: traditional or two-parent families--mother, father, and children; extended families--relatives other than the immediate family living in the home; single-parent families; adoptive families; foster families; families with stepparents; and blended families--new families formed by the marriage of a man and woman with children from previous marriages.

K.5 **The student will identify members of his or her own family.**
Descriptive Statement: This refers to identifying the adult and child members of the student's family.

K.6 **The student will develop an awareness of positive ways in which family members show love, affection, respect, an appreciation for each other.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus is on the positive words and actions which convey care, protection, and guidance. This includes touching, listening, hugging, praising, encouraging, supporting, helping, and playing. It also includes helping the child understand that rules are made for safety and protection.

K.7 **The student will realize that physical affection can be an experience of friendship, of celebration, or of a loving family.**
Descriptive Statement: It is important for the student to understand that appropriate expressions of affection are healthy for the individual and for the family.

K.8 **The student will recognize the elements of good and bad touches by others.**
Descriptive Statement: Elements of good touches by others are identified as follows: (1) touching that can be done in front of anyone; (2) touching that is not a secret; (3) touching that makes the child feel good and not uncomfortable; (4) touching that is done to provide cleaning or medical care for the child; and (5) touching that is an expression of affection by a family member. Bad touches by others include the following: (1) touching on private parts of the body; (2) touching to be kept a secret; and (3) touching that could produce bad feelings.

K.9 **The student will demonstrate how to say "no" to inappropriate approaches from family members, neighbors, strangers, and others.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves learning how to say "no" in a loud voice while standing up and looking directly at the person. It is important for children to know that they should tell or report such happenings to a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher, minister, grandparent, or guardian. In addition, they should understand the need to continue telling about inappropriate approaches until someone listens and responds.

K.10 **The student will identify "feeling good" and "feeling bad."**
Descriptive Statement: Descriptive words are used to help the child identify pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Parents are encouraged to reinforce expressions of feelings at home and to work with the teacher in a team approach to achieving this and other objectives.

K.11 **The student will find help safely if lost.**
Descriptive Statement: Students learn their full names, address, telephone numbers, and how to find reliable help if lost in a mall or other public place.

## Health

K.1 **The student will demonstrate desirable health practices.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on washing hands at appropriate times, brushing teeth, covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and not sharing personal items such as hats, combs, etc.

K.2 **The student will dress appropriately for all types of weather.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on seasonal/protective clothing and footwear.

K.3 **The student will recognize the importance of individuals who care for others and aid in preventing illness.**
Descriptive Statement: This refers to the value of family, doctors, nurses, dentists, and teachers, etc.

Mental Health

K.4 **The student will participate as a member of a group.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on being a friend, accepting responsibility, sharing, taking turns, and helping others.

K.5 **The student will demonstrate a positive self image.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes an awareness of self-worth, confidence, a positive approach to tasks, and an acceptance of constructive criticism.

K.6 **The student will demonstrate individual responsibility.**
Descriptive Statement: This pertains to personal grooming, classroom tasks, and personal belongings.

K.7 **The student will identify family members and their responsibilities.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on the student's perception of various family members' functions, relationships, and rights.

Nutrition

K.8 **The student will recognize that all living things need food.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on recognizing, through observation of plants and animals, that food is the basis for life.

K.9 **The student will recognize the necessity for practicing sanitary measures in handling food.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes the reasons for washing hands before eating, for washing certain foods, for not eating food dropped on the floor, and for not sharing foods which have been partially eaten.

K.10 **The student will practice appropriate eating habits.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on using eating utensils properly, chewing food properly, conversing pleasantly with neighbors, and following accepted guidelines for good table manners.

K.11 **The student will select wholesome snacks.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on selecting nutritious snacks such as fruits or raw vegetables in place of junk food.

## Personal Growth and Personal Health

K.12 **The student will develop and practice health habits related to personal hygiene and grooming.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on a discussion of the relationship of exercise, rest, bathing and acceptable toilet habits to good health, and the demonstration of proper techniques for handwashing, brushing teeth, and using comb and brush.

K.13 **The student will identify and locate certain parts of the body.**
Descriptive Statement: This refers to parts of the head, arms, legs, and trunks.

## Safety and First Aid

K.14 **The student will recognize and demonstrate bus safety practices.**
Descriptive Statement: This will include role playing all aspects of bus safety from bus stop behavior prior to boarding through bus unloading.

K.15 **The student will demonstrate safe use of school equipment.**
Descriptive Statement: This pertains to safe use of pencils, scissors, playground, and other school equipment.

K.16 **The student will keep foreign objects out of eyes, ears, and nose and mouth.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on dangers of small objects, foreign substances, and sharp instruments about face and head.

K.17 **The student will demonstrate safe practices during emergency evacuation procedures.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on safe practices such as walking, staying in line, not pushing, and being quiet when participating in emergency drills.

# Physical Education

## Physical Fitness and Conditioning

K.1 **The student will recognize that exercise causes an increase in heart rate.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on monitoring an increase in a partner's heart rate by placing a hand or ear on the partner's chest before and after exercise.

K.2 **The student will demonstrate stretching exercises.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes static exercises (slow stretch and hold for ten seconds) for the entire body with the emphasis on exercising the lower legs.

K.3 **The student will perform muscle strengthening activities.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on activities which affect the upper body such as arm circles and seal walk, and those that affect the legs such as the kangaroo hops.

Movement Exploration

K.4 **The student will identify body parts used in movement.**
Descriptive Statement: This requires locating and naming the basic external parts of the body such as head, arm, hands, legs, and feet.

K.5 **The student will maintain personal space.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on the movement possibilities in the space surrounding the body through non-locomotor or locomotor movements such as bending, stretching, swinging, walking, hopping, or jumping.

K.6 **The student will move safely and efficiently using general space.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on self-control within a room or boundary in relation to persons and objects while traveling in a variety of ways.

K.7 **The student will demonstrate spatial concepts while moving.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves experiences in moving over, under, around, between, and through objects.

K.8 **The student will demonstrate directional concepts while moving.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on moving forward, backward, upward, downward, and sideward.

K.9 **The student will discover ways of balancing on different body parts while stationary.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on the trial and error process of learning to support the body in various positions.

K.10 **The student will discover a variety of ways to manipulate objects.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on the creative process of using props such as hoops, ropes, balls, and beanbags.

K.11 **The student will perform a variety of locomotor skills.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on the execution of the walk, run, hoop, jump, and gallop.

## Rhythmic Activities/Dance

K.12 **The student will perform creative movement.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves originality in moving specific body parts and/or using props such as scarves and streamers

K.13 **The student will demonstrate rhythmically the concepts of fast and slow, loud, and soft.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on voice inflections, clapping and stamping, or the use of items such as rhythm instruments, ropes, and streamers.

K.14 **The student will participate in chants, action songs, and dances.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on following specific instructions.

## Stunts, Tumbling, and Gymnastics

K.15 **The student will perform lateral movements.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes stunts (e.g. bear walk) using one side of the body and then the other side of the body (e.g. right arm/right leg), (left arm/left leg).

K.16 **The student will perform cross lateral movements.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes stunt (e.g. alligator crawl) in which body parts move in opposition (e.g. right leg/left arm), (left leg/right arm).

K.17 **The student will move on straight and curved lines.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves moving on lines made of tape, rope, string, chalk, or paint.

K.18 **The student will perform rolling movements.**
Descriptive Statement: The emphasis is on sideward rolls such as log and egg rolls.

K.19 **The student will perform rocking movements while lying on the back in a tucked position.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes rocking forward and backward.

## Game Skills

K.20 **The student will follow two instructions in a given sequence.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves listening and responding correctly to those directions of low organization games such as "Squirrels in the Trees" or "Cowboys and Indians."

K.21 **The student will demonstrate the body management skills of starting and stopping.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves moving in running type games such as tag and chasing and fleeing.

K.22 **The student will demonstrate manual dexterity.**
Descriptive Statement: This includes performing the individual skills of rolling, bouncing and catching large rubber balls or bean bags.

K.23 **The student will kick a large stationary ball.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves kicking a large rubber ball with either foot.

**Music**

K.1 **The student will demonstrate the difference between a singing and a speaking voice.**

K.2 **The student will sing, move to music, and play simple instruments.**
Descriptive Statement: This involves participation in both group and individual actions. Emphasis is on development of a positive attitude toward music and one's self.

K.3 **The student will demonstrate the steady beat.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus is on matching the beat as a member of a group, using movement, vocal-body sounds, and instruments.

K.4 **The student will imitate (echo) simple two-pitch patterns sung or played by the teacher.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus is on matching the downward movement (not necessarily the exact pitch) of the common minor third interval (sol mi) frequently used by children at play. This pitch interval is associated with the "Yoo hoo call" and should be set within the child's comfortable singing range. Presentations may include recordings, singing, or melodic classroom instruments.

K.5 **The student will match body movement to continuing rhythm patterns.**
Descriptive Statement: This will include slow-even (walking), fast-even (running), and fast-uneven (galloping).

K.6 **The student will start to sing, play, or move at the appropriate time following the musical introduction of a familiar song.**
Descriptive Statement: The focus is on recognition of musical introductions and anticipation of their end (musical cadence).

K.7 **The student will demonstrate that music can move fast or slow.**
Descriptive Statement: Speed of the beat (tempo) may be demonstrated by chanting, playing instruments, moving, and singing.

K.8 **The student will imitate (echo) simple rhythm patterns.**
Descriptive Statement: Examples should include sounds and silences in patterns clapped or played by the teacher.

K.9 **The student will demonstrate loud and soft levels of sound.**
Descriptive Statement: The intensity of musical sound (dynamics) may be demonstrated by singing, playing instruments, or moving.

K.10 **The student will distinguish between vocal and instrumental music.**
Descriptive Statement: Examples should include entirely vocal or entirely instrumental composition.

K.11 **The student will identify classroom instruments by sight and sound.**
Descriptive Statement: This should include: drum, sticks, tambourine, triangle, cow bell, jingle bells, wood blocks, and sand blocks.

K.12 **The student will distinguish between a march and a lullaby.**
Descriptive Statement: Identification may be made by an appropriate physical response to examples of these contrasting styles.

K.13 **The student will create rhythmic movement to music.**
Descriptive Statement: Emphasis will be on concepts of space and direction such as up, down, forward, backward, left, right, or staying in place.

## A Suggested Schedule for Six-Hour Day

| Time | Involvement | Outcomes Anticipated |
|---|---|---|
| 8:30-8:40<br>Arrival | Teacher greets children individually. Children care for personal effects. | Self-concept enhanced. Sense of responsibility built. Social interaction encouraged. |
| 8:40-9:00<br>Group Time | Teacher leads group time. Children present special interests. Teacher initiates focus for day. Children assist with plans for day | Self-concept enhanced. Speaking and listening skills developed. Communication experienced. Vocabulary developed. Interests extended. New interests developed. Curiosity heightened. Responsiblitites for group activities begun. Appreciation of special days encouraged. |
| 9:00-10:00<br>Activity Time | Children choose from a wide variety of learning experiences including dramatic and block play, manipulative play, creative and science activities, and mathematical games. | Decision-making and self-direction encouraged. Leadership practiced. Self-concept enhanced. Motor and social development increased. Creative expression fostered. Perceptual experiences enlarged. Concepts and skills developed in many content areas including:<br>• Language Development<br>• Mathematics<br>• Safety/Health<br>• Science<br>• Social Studies |
| 10:00-10:15<br>Clean up | Children replace materials and equipment used. | Responsibility assumed. Sense of pride in school begun. |
| 10:15-10:30<br>Snack | Children have snack together. Children talk with each other, teacher, and/or aide. | Health education and mathematical concepts expanded. Social graces realized. Communciation experienced. Math concepts strengthened, such as:<br>•One-to-one correspondence<br>• Measurement. |
| 10:30-11:00<br>Literature | Teacher reads or tells story and/or poems. Teacher directs discussion, poses thought questions and directs follow-up activities. | Literature enjoyed. Repertoire of literature enlarged. Thinking extended. Realization established concerning value of printed page. Vocabulary expanded. |

| Time | Involvement | Outcomes Anticipated |
|---|---|---|
| 11:00-11:30<br>Physical Education | Children participate individually or in groups for physical education. | Physical body strengthened. Muscular coordination, balance and control enhanced. Individual problems noted. Group participation learned. |
| 11:30-11:45<br>Preparation for Lunch | Children prepare for lunch. | Habits of cleanliness and health begun. |
| 11:45-12:30<br>Lunch | Children eat nourishing lunch. Children talk to each other. | Positive health concepts developed. Communication skills utilized. |
| 12:30-1:00<br>Rest and Music Appreciation | Children rest as background music is played. Children participate in quiet activties (e.g., look at books, work puzzles). | Relaxation fostered. Aesthetic appreciation extended. |
| 1:00-2:00<br>Perception, Awareness, and Elaboration Experiences | Teacher guides experiences carefully to extend interests and abilities of all children. Activities provided include:<br>• Field trips<br>• Science experiments<br>• Social studies projects<br>• Library visits<br>• Art experiences | Curiosity, creativity, and communication extended. Appreciation for others fostered. Thoughts clarified. Basic concepts and skills appropriate for age introduced and explored. Joy of discovery experienced. Awareness of natural environment fostered. Problem-solving attempts encouraged. |
| 2:00-2:30<br>Music | Children respond individually or in groups in many forms of music and rhythms. Children create songs and rhythms. | Music learned and enjoyed. Listening skills heightened. Creative abilities extended. Balance and coordination developed. |
| 2:30-2:45<br>Daily Evaluation | Children and teacher review and evaluate day's activities. Children relate experiences of the day, may dictate experience story to teacher. Teacher gives personal goodbye to each child. | Experiences evaluated. Sight vocabulary begun. Appreciation for printed page enhanced. Feeling toward self in relation school and peers enhanced. |

*A three-hour day includes many of the same areas, but eliminates lunch time, rest time, and opportunities for elaboration of daily experiences and some activities in music, physical education, and art.

## SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND PRACTICES RELATED TO DEVELOPMENTAL KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

A definition and an operational description of developmental kindergarten form the core of this paper; however, important influences on the program lie in practices within the school organization and philosophy. All such influences must act positively on the implementation of a developmental kindergarten and, therefore, bear discussing in this paper.

To support the purposes of this paper specific topics which can either impede or enhance the kindergarten program are included. **Parental Involvement** must be considered because the school cannot accomplish its mission without embracing the hopes and desires that parents have for their own children. **Teacher training** must be addressed because research tells us that the professional preparation of the teacher is the most significant element in quality programs. A section has been included on **assessment** because the use of tests to determine readiness for and placement in kindergarten has become part of Virginia law. Testing has become a strong influence on what happens to children in their early years. This section is more technical than other sections; however, teachers and administrators must come to understand the limitations and fine distinctions of various methods of assessment. Finally, a statement must be made about **transition to first grade**. Following a discussion of the historical changes which have occurred in kindergarten, this section includes a list of practices which may support teachers and children working in a primary unit of organization and give direction to a curriculum that must become increasingly similar. Each of the following sections may be read and studied as individual concerns or may be regarded as an integral part of the discussion of developmental kindergarten.

## Parent Involvement

A parent, as the child's first teacher, has both the right and the responsibility to be involved in the child's formal education. The school has both the responsibility and the need to involve parents in the learning of their children. Never was it possible for the school to help children grow and develop without mutual respect and support between the home and the school. Today, this cooperation between home and school emerges as an even more powerful force in children's achievement.

Research has clearly shown that parent involvement is a critical variable in a child's education. Results of studies in two bibliographies of the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE), 1981 and 1987, suggested that parents who helped their children by establishing a strong learning environment in the home, who stimulated their children's interest in learning, and who supported their children's natural curiosity fostered attitudes that were important to their children's achievement in school. Based on the studies summarized in the two NCCE reports, the involvement of parents in the school was also found to influence student achievement. In addition, parents who were involved with the school developed more positive attitudes towards the school and its goals.

Schools must not only welcome parents, but actively encourage and seek their participation in the education of their children. Teachers and administrators must have the skill and the desire to involve all families in meaningful roles within the school community. Parents of cultural, ethnic, and familial differences must perceive the school as their school.

It is important that a parent's first experience with the school be a positive one. Careful planning and understanding on the part of school administrators in general and kindergarten teachers in particular is needed to:

1. recognize and value the role of the parent as the first teacher of the kindergarten child;

2. respect the parents as the persons who know their own children best.

3. accept the cultural and familial uniqueness of each family;

4. create an environment in which all parents feel welcome and capable of contributing to their children's education;

5. recognize that there are a variety of ways parents may choose to be involved;

## Teacher Training

Appropriately planned and implemented programs for kindergarten children depend on the kindergarten teacher's knowledge and understanding of child development and early childhood education and on the ability to translate theory into practice. Early childhood education is distinctly different from elementary education; during early childhood, areas of development and learning are undifferentiated by subject matter, and young children's thinking is qualitatively different from that of older children and adults. Teachers in developmentally appropriate kindergartens need to have in-depth knowledge of child development, learning theory, language acquisition, instructional techniques, appropriate materials, evaluation of children's learning, and parent involvement/education (Davis, 1989). It is imperative that teacher preparation programs provide study in child development as the foundation for the practice of early childhood education so that knowledge gained from theory of human growth and development can be used to inform practices. Preparation, certification, and ongoing evaluation of teachers ensure that they are trained to work effectively with young children.

While educators generally acknowledge the uniqueness of the early years, teacher preparation and certification still include early childhood with elementary education. Jan McCarthy (1984) found that only 24 states and the District of Columbia certify early childhood teachers as distinct from elementary teachers. Because state certification standards dictate the content of preparation programs throughtout the nation, the diversity of state standards is of considerable interest. Competent early childhood teachers need appropriate training and experience to fulfill their important role as teachers of young children. As young teachers enter the classroom, ongoing training and support are necessary for them to keep up-to-date on current knowledge of child development and its application to early childhood education. Kindergarten teachers must, therefore, have:

1. college-level training with a focus on child development and early childhood education;
2. supervised teaching of kindergarten children; and
3. continuous staff development.

Kindergarten teachers must be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of child development theories and early childhood methodology as they:

1. prepare the learning environment;
2. plan and implement the kindergarten curriculum;
3. observe and evaluate formally and informally the development, behavior, and learning of kindergarten children;
4. commmunicate and collaborate with parents and professional colleagues;
5. foster and facilitate learning within the environment.

## Assessment

Assessment of children's learning is a complex process of gathering formal and informal information in order to make responsible decisions for the best interest of the child. Information gathered through both standardized testing and informal assessment procedures must be used together to make decisions about the best outcomes for children. Assessment practices should reflect and be consistent with the developmental nature of the kindergarten curriculum.

Information about a group of children, collected over time, can be used by teachers in planning and making decisions about the curriculum and accommodate the progress of the group. Cumulative information about individual children can be used in planning curricula and designing activities to promote the development of each child. Data from assessment measures can also be useful in consulting with parents. Another form of assessment, screening, and diagnosis is used to identify children who may be in need of specialized services and programs.

### Informal Assessment

Informal assessment should be an ongoing process done primarily by the teacher on a daily basis as the method focuses on the child as the learner. Information gained from direct measures of the child's behavior provide information to the teacher and parents about what the child can do on a specific task in a given context. A variety of unobtrusive measurement procedures can be used to record and evaluate children's developmental progress. Examples of each type of procedure include:

1. Observing and recording information about children by using
   - specimen records
   - event sampling
   - anecdotal records
   - diary/journal entries
   - checklists
   - rating scales

2. Documenting the work children do and how they do it by collecting
   - work products (drawing or writing, record of reading behavior, constructions, dramatic play, dictated or written stories)
   - photographs of children's work
   - recordings of children's speech
   - audio and/or video recordings of verbal and nonverbal interactions

3. Collecting and recording information from parents through
   interviews
   questionnaires
   informal and formal exchanges

Information gathered through informal assessment should always be used for instructional planning, making decisions about further evaluation, making decisions about placement, and communicating with parents and other teachers.

## Formal Assessment

Formal assessment includes norm-referenced tests that are administered either individually or in groups. Standardized tests are used primarily to classify and compare groups. Because the items comprising these tests represent a limited sampling of knowledge and achievement in specific areas, the results must not be used alone to evaluate individual performance or place children in homogenous groups. Results from formal assessment procedures must instead be combined with direct, informal measures to yield useful information needed to document children's learning and make curricular changes. Individually-administered standardized tests are more appropriate for kindergarten children than group-administered tests because young children do not perform predictably in group assessment situations.

To make the most accurate decisions regarding kindergarten children, it is the professional responsibility of administrators and teachers to "critically evaluate, carefully select, and use standardized tests only for the purposes for which they are intended and for which data exists demonstrating the tests' validity, i.e., the degree to which the test accurately measures what it purports to measure" (Bredekamp, 1987, p.44). Standardized tests serve four purposes:

1. to assess children's ability to acquire skills as the first step in identifying potential learning problems and handicapping conditions (developmental screening);

2. to identify children who have special needs, to determine the nature of a problem, and to suggest remediation strategies (diagnostic tests and intelligence tests);

3. to assess children's readiness for specific academic instruction (readiness tests);

4. to measure what children have learned or what skills have been acquired from instruction (achievement tests).

The two most frequently-used types of standardized tests are developmental screening tests and readiness tests.

*Developmental Screening.* The importance of early identification and intervention is widely recognized. Furthermore, as a consequence of Public Law 99-457, schools are required to screen children for potential handicapping conditions. Developmental screening, a first step in the evaluation and identification of possible learning problems or handicapping conditions, should cover a broad range of developmental areas: (a) Visual-motor/adaptive; (b) Language and cognition; and (c) Gross motor/body awareness (Meisels, 1985). The levels of validity and reliability of the selected instrument are especially important because the results of the test can greatly affect the child's development. Information on screening tests must include "data concerning the proportion of at-risk children correctly identified (test sensitivity) and the proportion of those not at-risk who are correctly found to be without major problems (test specificity)" (National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC, 1988, p.43). It is critical that developmental screening be used **only** as a first step in the assessment process; that the information gathered must be further substantiated and "not be seen as a diagnosis of delay, handicap, or justification for exclusion or retention from chronological age-appropriate programs" (Illinois Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, IASCD, 1989).

If a comprehensive diagnostic process is recommended after screening, key conditions warranting the implementation of this process should be delineated and documented for parents in writing. Throughout the assessment process, parents must be informed in writing about diagnostic resources, parents' rights, and reasons for referral.

*Readiness Testing.* Readiness tests are used to assess the level of skills and knowledge children have acquired as compared with other children in the same age range, and the level of preparedness for a particular academic or preacademic program (NAEYC, 1988, p.45). Based on this information, teachers can plan individualized curricula. It is **not** a valid use of readiness tests to determine if a child can enter kindergarten, can be kept out for another year, can be placed in "pre-kindergarten", or can be placed in a "transitional" classroom or first grade. These tests should **not** be used in making placement decisions. Furthermore, studies have shown repeatedly that readiness tests do not predict success in kindergarten and in later grades. Each of these considerations must force teachers and administrators as the users of powerful yet limited tools to ensure that appropriate assessment of kindergarten children should:

- be an ongoing process;
- include a variety of methods for gathering information about the kindergarten child;

- be based on principles of human development and on research data;
- provide information that will allow teachers to make decisions about the best outcomes for children;
- employ the most psychometrically sound instruments available.
- combine information gathered through a variety of measures so that interpretations and decisions about the curriculum can be made and activities to promote children's growth and development can be designed.

Test scores should not be used to keep children out of kindergarten. Entrance to kindergarten should be based on chronological age within the five-year-old range. Children should not be denied entry to kindergarten on the basis of lack of maturational readiness. Research on entry age to kindergarten does not support, in general, the assumption that older children will be ready. If readiness tests are used to keep children out of kindergarten, then those who could receive the most benefit from a developmentally appropriate kindergarten experience will be kept out. Curriculum should be planned to address a wide range of developmental levels in a single classroom. It is the responsibility of the educational system to provide appropriate and effective educational programs for each child, regardless of the entry age of the child (Bredekamp, 1987; Wolf & Kessler, 1987).

## Transition from Kindergarten to First Grade

According to Piaget, children from two to seven years of age are in a preoperational stage of development. Children at this stage are eager learners, constantly exploring, manipulating, and experimenting with the environment to learn more about it. They are rapidly acquiring language and are eager to know and use new words. Within this preoperational stage, there are many levels, and individual children progress at their own unique rates of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development (Day, 1988).

Historically, kindergarten and first grade were similar in program content, with the first-grade curriculum building on the kindergarten curriculum to create a natural transition from one year to the next. With the advent of Sputnik and the race for space, the first-grade curriculum began to change by becoming more academically oriented. As academic expectations increased for younger and younger children, teachers began teaching the adopted texts and moved away from a child-initiated approach to learning that had characterized the early years of education. Expectations for what must be accomplished in the first grade continued to increase so that first-grade teachers began pressuring kindergarten teachers to better prepare children for the academic demands of the first grade and ultimately to assume part of the first-grade curriculum. Kindergarten teachers found themselves faced with the need to teach children how to sit still, to work quietly, and to complete pencil-paper tasks that had become the hallmark of the first grade. Teachers who stayed close to their early childhood roots found that their students were able to complete successfully the kindergarten year, but were often frustrated by the demands placed on them the following year. The discrepancy between the child-centered kindergartens and the teacher-directed first grades became increasingly apparent so that now the need for a way to ease the transition between the two grades is imperative.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987) has recommended four ways to facilitate transitions for children from kindergarten to first grade. These include:

1. Provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum for all age levels in all educational settings.

   To ensure successful transitions from kindergarten to first grade, we must continue to provide developmentally appropriate curriculum for all age levels in all educational settings. As preoperational learners, both five and six-year-old children benefit from an integrated curriculum that actively involves children in constructing knowledge for themselves. First graders and kindergarteners learn best by interacting with their peers, other adults, and their environment.

2. Maintain ongoing communication and cooperation between staff at different programs.

   Kindergarten and first-grade teachers, working with administrative personnel, must maintain ongoing communication and cooperation with each other to understand the expectations for each grade, to effectively provide appropriate learning experiences for the children they teach, and to help children progress successfully to the next level.

3. Prepare children for the transition.

   Children are better prepared for the expectations of first grade when they have regular opportunities to visit first-grade classes, meet the teachers, and talk to the children in first grade about what they are doing.

4. Involve parents in the transitions.

   Parents must also be involved in the transitions their children make as they move from kindergarten to first grade by sharing with teachers their concerns and goals for their children and by listening to the expectations of the teachers.

To facilitate the transition from kindergarten to first grade, administrators and teachers may find this list of practices vital to building a primary unit of instruction within the elementary school.

- Maintain a child-centered (versus content-centered) curriculum at each level.
- Provide learning experiences appropriate to the child's developmental level and ability.
- Maintain a child-to-teacher ratio that is as small as possible in first grade.
- Place students in heterogeneously-grouped classrooms and use flexible grouping within the classroom for instructional needs.
- Insure a variety of instructional strategies by providing individual, small-group, and whole-group instruction.
- Provide equipment and materials that can support a child-centered, concrete learning environment (i.e., tables instead of desks in first grade, rug areas, writing centers, classroom libraries, science, and math areas, etc.).

- Assist teachers in becoming facilitators of learning and sensitive observers of early learning behaviors.

- Assess children, using informal measures on a regular basis to monitor progress and provide information for instructional planning.

- Create literate classroom environments. Create real reasons for children to read and write. Encourage personal attempts to write using invented spelling.

- Provide teachers with knowledge about emergent literacy behaviors and activities that are developmentally appropriate and support such behaviors.

- Promote the development of reading and math skills through "hands-on" learning experiences and the use of manipulative materials.

- Provide inservice/staff development for kindergarten through second-grade teachers so that their practices will be consistent with early childhood research findings.

- Provide inservice/staff development for administrators to increase awareness of early childhood needs and practices.

- Locate kindergarten and first-grade classes near each other to facilitate communication.

- Encourage cooperative learning ventures between kindergarten and primary-grade classes (i.e., reading, field trips, and special projects).

- Design progress reports in kindergarten and the primary grades that reflect children's developmental stages rather than subject matter achievement.

- Establish and maintain opportunities for communication and education of parents and the community.

- Arrange orientation sessions and visits to first grade for kindergarten parents and children.

## A RESOLVE TO PROMOTE AND MAINTAIN APPROPRIATE PROGRAMS IN KINDERGARTEN

The success of an appropriate kindergarten program depends on the continued promotion and maintenance of that philosophy within the school. There must be continued and varied communication efforts, reaching not only administrators, teachers, parents, and policy makers, but the community at large. The key communicators are the building principal and the teaching staff.

**Administrators** and **supervisors** must assume leadership for providing a curriculum that is appropriate for young children entering the public schools and that is sensitive to children as they progress through the educational system.

Because children grow and develop at different rates, **teachers** of children in the primary grades must work collaboratively to build on previously learned concepts and skills. Kindergarten children who are able to complete tasks traditionally considered part of the first-grade curriculum and are interested in completing them should be allowed to do so without having to repeat those same tasks when they enter first grade. Children who have progressed more slowly in kindergarten must be allowed to continue in first grade with learning experiences that will meet their developmental needs without expecting them to master curriculum for which they are not yet ready. Therefore, for children to move continuously through the primary grades, **teachers** at each grade level must work together to support the progress children are making by adjusting teacher expectations and demands to the children's individual developmental needs.

It is important for **parents** to recognize that because children grow and develop at varying rates, instructional personnel will be sensitive to each child's needs with the goal of providing quality education that allows each one to reach his or her full potential. Because appropriate educational practices for children in the primary grades may appear to be very different from parental expectations, teachers must work with parents to explain what they are doing in the classroom and why; answer questions about children's progress; and suggest ways that they, as parents, can support their children's learning at home.

The **community** must also be educated to the varying needs of developing learners so that they can support the efforts of parents and school personnel as they provide the most appropriate education for the community's youngest citizens.

The following is a list of recommended strategies that each participant in a child's education can use to inform others of the importance of practices that are appropriate for five-year-olds.

Administrators

- Visit kindergarten classrooms regularly to observe children and their learning processes.
- Participate in professional early childhood organizations.
- Keep abreast of current research/strategies for appropriate classroom practices.
- Assess local programs and establish goals and expectations to ensure the continuation of appropriate kindergarten programs.
- Provide leadership for developing, implementing, and evaluating kindergarten programs that reflect appropriate practices.
- Promote a colleagial relationship among kindergarten and primary-grade teachers by providing opportunities for attending in-service/staff development activities, sharing and collaboration, attending professional conferences (e.g. Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education and the State Kindergarten Conference), and ordering appropriate learning materials and resources.
- Provide information and opportunities for discussion to school boards, parents, and staff on appropriate practices in the K-3 grades.

Teachers

- Create opportunities for administrators to visit kindergarten classrooms, observe children, and discuss the learning activities.
- Meet with colleagues to plan appropriate goals and experiences.
- Attend staff development/inservice workshops and conferences.
- Network with other teachers in other schools and/or divisions.
- Participate in professional early childhood organizations.

- Develop partnerships with parents through orientation meetings, conferences, open houses, newsletters, parents' bulletin boards, volunteer programs, and home visits.

- Keep abreast of current research and practices in early childhood education.

Parents

- Communicate frequently with the teacher about the child's experiences and development.

- Read recommended articles and books concerning child development.

- Become and remain actively involved in school programs such as advisory boards, community involvement teams, PTA committees, and volunteer activities.
- Become strong advocates in the community for appropriate practices.

State and Local Decision Policy Makers

- Provide copies of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (National Association for the Education of Young Children) to principals, school boards, PTA's, and local governing bodies.

- Provide copies of Right from the Start: The Report of the National Association of State Boards of Education Task Force on Early Childhood Education for examination and discussion.

- Ensure that assessment programs such as the Beginning Teachers Assistance Program (BTAP) and staff evaluations reflect appropriate practices.

- Select student achievement measures that follow appropriate practices.

- Keep a community focus on appropriate practices through teleconferences/videotapes and other available media.

- Provide inservice/recertification opportunities for adminstrators in early childhood education.

All participants in the lives of young children must realize that children are by nature learners. They cease to learn, however, when we reverse the importance of what we are teaching and their need to know in the orderly course of growing up. Curricula decisions cannot precede decisions about how five-year-olds learn.

The development of this paper is the beginning of a series of events which must take place over the next five years. The first step will be the presentation of this paper to kindergarten teachers, administrators, and college personnel at the 1989 Kindergarten Conference to build an awareness of the problem. The second step will be training of teachers and administrators in regional sessions throughout 1990 and 1991. Publications which address the various constituencies of kindergarten may prove valuable as reclaiming kindergarten becomes the first step towards restructuring the elementary school.

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